**Amendments to the Specification:**

To correct the informality objected to by the Examiner, please replace the second paragraph of the Background of the Related Art, beginning on page 2 of the originally filed application, as follows:

Electrochemical cells include various types, such as alkaline, phosphoric acid, solid oxide, and proton exchange membrane cells. Each of these types are named for the type of electrolyte used in the electrochemical cell. The proton exchange membrane (PEM) cell is of great interest due to its low temperature operation and its potential for lightweight design of electrochemical cell stacks. When operating PEM cells at high pressure it is necessary to provide seals between adjacent components. Efforts to reduce the weight of these ~~plainer~~ planar components ~~has~~ have lead away from the use of heavy metal plates or thick graphite members and toward the use of thin polymer components or composite components. However, these polymer components have inherent temperature and strength limitations that the design must take into account.

To correct a typographical error identified by the Applicant, please replace the first paragraph of the Detailed Description of the Invention, beginning on page 5 of the originally filed application, as follows:

The present invention provides polymeric electrochemical cell components having a perimeter edge reinforced by a band or hoop. The band or hoop is preferably made from a material having a high tensile strength that resists elongation under tension. Preferred materials for forming the band include metals and polymer fibers such as aromatic polyamide fibers, available under the trademark ~~PEVLAR~~ KEVLAR, a registered trademark of Dupont, a corporation of Wilmington, Delaware. Furthermore, the band may be positioned around the perimeter of the polymer component in any reasonable fashion. For example, the band may be pressed fit around the component, formed about the component, wound about the component, or merely positioned adjacent at a narrow gap from the component. Furthermore, the band may be dedicated to a single component or the band may reinforce the plurality of component that

establish a sub-assembly, sub-stack or complete stack of electrochemical cells.